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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 004568

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/STEINGER; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS;
TREASURY FOR SZUBIN/LOEFFLER/NUGENT/HIRSON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV ECON ETRD KWBG KPAL IS
SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS SEEK PROGRESS ON WEST BANK MOVEMENT
AMA IMPLEMENTATION

REF: A. JERUSALEM 4511
B. JERUSALEM 4472

11. (SBU) Summary: ConGenoffs, accompanied by USSC, USAID and Embassy Tel Aviv representatives, met October 17 with Palestinians involved in the negotiation of the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA). The informal meeting, the third in a series of preliminary brainstorming discussions intended to reinvigorate AMA implementation efforts, focused on movement within the West Bank and West Bank-Gaza convoys (reported septel). The Palestinian team pressed for internal West Bank movement to be dealt with comprehensively, rather than through a piecemeal approach to eliminate only certain checkpoints or restrictions. They stressed that the PA would not be a formal party to the prospective negotiations because any agreement on ameliorating the situation would denote acceptance of the closure regime. They stressed that they consider the issue to be political, rather than technical. As a result, they pointed out that they do not consider "the principle of transportation contiguity"--or a separate road network linking Palestinian areas--to be an acceptable alternative to territorial contiguity within the West Bank. End summary.

SOLUTION MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE

12. (SBU) The Palestinians, led by representatives of the PLO's Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) and including former PA Planning Minister Ghassan al-Khatib, reiterated that they consider the entire regime of movement restrictions within the West Bank to be illegal, and, as a result, they will not be a formal party to negotiations to ameliorate it. (Note: The AMA speaks only of US-Israeli discussions on this issue.)

They reviewed the current regime of West Bank movement restrictions and its impact on Palestinian life. According to the Palestinian team, there are 125 km of roads in the West Bank that Palestinians are prohibited from using. There are 1200 km of roads that have severe restrictions on Palestinian use. The Palestinian team reported that UN OCHA's latest figures note 528 obstacles to Palestinian movement in the West Bank, which represents a 40 percent increase since August 2005. The Palestinian team also noted that many of the checkpoints separating the West Bank from green-line Israel are several kilometers inside the West Bank, thus, they argued, checkpoints like Qalandiya, Beituniya, and the Bethlehem Rachel's Tomb are part of the issue of internal West Bank movement restrictions. Finally, the Palestinian team said that they also consider the GOI

internal West Bank permit regime to be one of the primary obstacles to movement within the West Bank.

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT SIGNIFICANT

¶3. (SBU) All of these obstacles, according to the Palestinian team, cause significant humanitarian problems in the West Bank today. For example, the obstacles to movement have effectively divided the West Bank into three parts: northern, central, and southern. They have also led to the narrowing of the West Bank, by making the area between the separation barrier and the Green Line, the Jordan Valley, and East Jerusalem off-limits to the majority of Palestinians. The Palestinian team argued that the impact of this regime is to entrench Israeli settlements in the West Bank and warned that improvement on movement and access should not have this result.

PROBLEM IS POLITICAL, NOT TECHNICAL

¶4. (SBU) The Palestinian team stressed that restrictions on West Bank movement are a political, not a technical, issue. They noted that there are serious obstacles to movement around every West Bank city. (For example, they pointed out that Jenin is now completely cut off from Nablus.) Former Planning Minister al-Khatib insisted that this clearly indicated an Israeli policy of making inter-city travel in the West Bank impossible. He added that movement restrictions are a tool through which Israel is trying to determine the future of the area. Both al-Khatib and others noted that the restrictions are extremely detrimental to the Palestinian economy. Because of the political nature of the problem and its impact on the Palestinian economy, the

Palestinian team reiterated their position that the only workable solution would be a comprehensive solution. Al-Khatib stressed that, in his opinion, the checkpoints are more of a cause of violence than a measure to prevent insecurity.

¶5. (SBU) In closing the discussion, the Palestinian team advised us that they believe the principle of "transportation contiguity" is not a solution and is not an acceptable alternative to territorial contiguity. They said that in earlier phases of the negotiations, Israel had suggested that they construct two separate road networks in the West Bank, one exclusively for Israeli use and one exclusively for Palestinian use. The Palestinian team rejected this solution and insisted that engaging in construction of an alternate road network is the same as engaging in construction of the separation barrier.

WALLES